

Wells Branch Community Church
Sex, Marriage, and Ministry Position Paper

Our “theological priorities” at Wells Branch include the following statement under our *secondary* doctrinal commitments (where we practice *leadership clarity and membership unity*):

Wells Branch Community Church is complementarian in our view of men and women. What does that mean? It means we believe in the equal value/worth of men and women as created in God’s image AND hold to distinct roles for men and women in the home and the church.

In this position paper, the Wells Branch elders seek to expand this statement, define terms, and review key passages that shape our understanding of the meaning of roles for men and women within the life of the family and the church.

It is important to start by recognizing that orthodox, Bible-believing Christians can disagree with one another on this secondary doctrine and still love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. We work with many churches in our city that have different beliefs and practices when it comes to the roles of men and women in the church.

This doesn’t mean our convictions are unimportant or insignificant. We believe our interpretations of these passages are faithful to the original meaning, and we build our ministry model to submit to Scripture, to our best understanding of God’s good design. We ask all those in ministry leadership at Wells Branch Community Church to support and teach our position as laid out in the following document.

1. Why did God create us male and female?

God created the male and the female as the way to reflect His image into creation (Gen 1:26-27). Adam was created first (Gen 2:15, 1 Tim 2:13) and then Eve (Gen 2:22). God created woman from the same substance as man (Gen 2:22-23), and He designed the woman as a “companion corresponding to him.” (Gen 2:18). In other words, God created men and women to complement each other, bringing their unique strengths and abilities into the family, church, and community. Men and women are different by design, united in purpose to rule over creation and build culture (Gen 1:28-29). God also designed the male and female to become one in marriage (Gen 2:24-25 and Ma 19:4-6). It is through the union of man and woman in sexual oneness in marriage that children are created and brought into the world. (Gen 1:28, 2:24).

EQUAL IN CHRIST

In what ways are men and women equal before the Lord?

1. Equal in Value, Worth, and Dignity

Because men and women are both created in God's image (Genesis 1:27), they are equal in value, worth, and dignity. Men are not more valuable than women, and women are not more valuable than men. In God's eyes, men and women carry equal dignity and worth.

2. Equal in Salvation

Men and women are both saved by grace through faith in Christ (Eph 2:8-9). They are both made right with God through the blood of Jesus and the regenerating work of the Spirit. Men and women are one in Christ (Gal 3:28), united by the gospel, and brothers and sisters by faith (Ma 12:50). From an eternal perspective, men and women are co-heirs with Christ, with an equal inheritance in His Kingdom (1 Peter 3:7).

3. Equal in the Holy Spirit

Men and women who believe in Christ receive equal blessings from the Holy Spirit. They are equally baptized (1 Cor 12:13), filled (Eph 5:18), called (Eph 4:1), sealed (Eph 1:13), and gifted (Rom 12:6-8). The Bible does not distinguish between male and female spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are given to men and women within the Church as the Holy Spirit determines.

4. Equal in Mission

Jesus called all of his disciples to testify to His resurrection (Acts 1:8) and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18). Jesus had 12 male Apostles, but He also had many female disciples who followed Him, supported His work, and spread His message (Luke 8:1-3). Men and women carry the Great Commission equally into the world.

DISTINCT IN ROLES

In what ways does God call men and women to different roles in marriage & ministry?

1. Complementary Roles in Marriage

Not all men and women are called to marriage. Singleness is a Christ-honoring calling that allows full commitment to serve the Lord (1 Cor 7:32-34). In marriage, God calls men to leave their father and mother and become one with their wives (Gen 2:24). Christian marriage is a lifelong covenant commitment between one man and one woman (Matthew 19:1-10).

Within Christian marriage, God calls husbands to be loving, servant leaders of their wives, and wives to respectfully submit to their husbands. Ephesians 5:25-30 (along with Col 3:19 and 1 Pet 3:7) commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the church and to give up his own rights for her flourishing. The husband is called to use his headship (Eph 5:23, 1 Cor 11:3) over his wife as Christ uses His headship over the church – to serve, sacrifice, and lead for her benefit at his expense. Husbands are to honor their wives as co-heirs with them under Christ (1 Peter 3:7).

Ephesians 5:22-24 (along with Col 3:18, Titus 2:5, and 1 Peter 3:1-6) commands wives to respectfully submit to their husbands as an act of devotion to the Lord. As the church submits to Christ, wives are commanded to respectfully submit to their husband's leadership. This does not mean that they should follow their husbands into sin, as their ultimate allegiance is to Christ. It also does not mean that they should submit to verbal, physical, or emotional abuse. Rather, it means that in issues that are not sinful, they should respectfully follow and encourage their husband's leadership.

Both husbands and wives are called to provide for the needs of their families (1 Tim 5:8, Proverbs 31:13-21), stay faithful to their spouse (Hebrews 13:4), and raise their children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). God calls older Christian men to disciple younger Christian men and older Christian women to disciple younger Christian women to follow Jesus and grow in maturity (Titus 2:1-8). Husbands provide spiritual leadership in marriage. Wise husbands will listen to the godly counsel and biblical wisdom of their wives (Proverbs 12:15).

As Christian husbands lead their homes, they must also submit to authority in their lives. Along with women, men are also called to submit to church elders (Heb 13:17), to government rulers (Romans 13:1-2), to employers (Eph 6:5), and to the authority of God Himself (James 4:7). Husbands are called to model godly submission to authority to their wives and children.

2. Complementary Roles in Church

The Bible gives evidence of women following Jesus as disciples (Luke 8:1-3), serving in significant ministry roles in the early church (Romans 16:1-16), and co-laboring with the apostles for the gospel (Acts 18:26, Philippians 4:2-3). Just like men, women are called by God to use their gifts, talents, and abilities to proclaim the gospel, make disciples, and build up the church. At the same time, God has established a clear pattern of male leadership within the local church that restricts the role of elder (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5) and teaching in corporate gatherings on behalf of the elders (1 Tim 2:11-14, 1 Cor 14:32-36) to biblically qualified men.

The pattern of gifted women functioning under male spiritual leadership is seen throughout the Bible – from the male priesthood in the Old Testament to Jesus choosing 12 men to be the founding apostles of the church to the New Testament epistles calling men to serve as church elders. This doesn't mean that women are not given or called to lead, but that God has a unique role for men to fulfill in providing authoritative leadership for His people in the Church.

Elders in the New Testament are not commanded to lead alone, but in plurality (Acts 14:23) so that even as elders provide leadership to the church, they also submit to Christ (1 Peter 5:1-4) and to one another as a group (1 Tim 5:17). Local church elders in the New Testament are biblically qualified men who have been set apart by the Holy Spirit and the local church to work with a group of other elders to follow Jesus' leadership in shepherding, discipling, guarding, and expanding His church. They are called to lead as Jesus taught leadership – using their position and authority to serve others, not to lord it over others (Matthew 20:24-28, 1 Peter 5:2-3).

Like men, women in the local church are called to use their spiritual gifts to serve the body while at the same time honoring the spiritual authority that God has placed above them (1 Cor 11:2-16). Women in the

New Testament are seen ministering in a variety of contexts and roles while at the same time not serving as elders or pastors in the local church.

How Wells Branch Community Church Applies Our Understanding of Complementarianism from the Scriptures

- 1- **DEACONS** We consistently work to equip, encourage, support, and honor women who serve in ministry – whether they do so as a volunteer or paid member of our staff. (Romans 12:10) We have both male and female deacons at Wells Branch Community Church, based on our understanding of 1 Tim 3:8-13 and the example of Phoebe in Romans 16:1. Deacons are to organize, facilitate, and manage people in ministry, but do not have biblical authority over other members of the body of Christ.
- 2- **ELDERS:** We restrict the role of elders to biblically qualified men within our congregation (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6, 1 Peter 5:2).
- 3- **PASTORS:** In our ecclesiology, we restrict the role of lead pastor to men because he also serves as a perpetual elder. In addition, we limit the role of Pastor and the teaching of God’s Word in corporate gatherings on behalf of the elders to men (1 Tim 2:11-12, 1 Cor 14:34-35).
- 4- **STAFF:** All ministry positions that require authoritative corporate teaching are limited to biblically qualified men. All other ministerial staff positions that don’t require authoritative teaching of mixed adults are open to men and women. Elders, pastors, and men qualified by the elders are authorized to officiate weddings and funerals on behalf of Wells Branch Community Church. The final step in church discipline (official removal from church membership) is a decision reserved for the Wells Branch Community Church elders. We commission only men to the pastoral ministry. We commission both men and women to vocational gospel ministry.
- 5- **LAY LEADERS:** We allow Christians to administer the ordinances (communion and baptism) within corporate gatherings. Authoritative teaching (interpreting the scriptures and explaining doctrine that applies to everyone) is limited to qualified men appointed by the elders in a mixed setting in line with the established doctrinal positions of the church. (Titus 2:3-5, Romans 12:7, 1 Corinthians 11:4-5). Prophecy (declaring the divine will of God, encouraging others through a personal application of God’s Word) is encouraged and an indispensable gift of the church that both sexes are called to exercise. However, women should not lead men or authoritatively teach in a mixed setting. Prayer (talking to God corporately) is encouraged and another gift that God calls both sexes to exercise.
- 6- Women may authoritatively teach children. (2 Tim 3:14-17) At Wells Branch Community Church we consider anyone under 18 a child.
- 7- We only officiate biblically defined marriages between one man and one woman who are equally yoked spiritually (which means we will not marry a Christian to a non-Christian). (Genesis 2:24, Ma 19:1-9, 2 Cor 6:14)
- 8- We equip husbands and wives to fulfill their God-given roles in marriage. (Eph 5:22-33)
- 9- We call Christians to use whatever authority they have been given in the home, church, or society to

follow Christ's example of selfless, servant leadership, not domineering or abusive leadership.
(Matthew 20:24-28)

10- We call all Christians to submit to God-given authority in their lives in a way that honors God and one another. (Hebrews 13:17)

11- We remind all Christians that we will give an account to God for how we have treated others in our lives, and call believers to treat one another with love, respect, honor, and kindness. (Col 3:12-14)

What We Don't Affirm at Wells Branch Community Church

1- We deny that submission in marriage or the church means allowing or overlooking emotional, verbal, or physical abuse. We encourage men and women to remove themselves physically from abusive situations, and we report all physical and sexual abuse to the proper civil authorities.

2- We deny that women are inferior to men. We reject and confront all forms of misogyny, prejudice, and violence against women.

3- We deny that all women should submit to all men. This is nowhere commanded in Scripture. Single men and women are to treat one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, living in purity and love toward one another and in submission to the elders of the church.

4- We deny that women can't teach or lead men in society and in the business setting. Women with leadership and teaching gifting can and should lead and teach men and women within society and in the business setting (Acts 16:12-15). It is the authoritative biblical teaching to the corporate gathering of the church that God prohibits for women..

5- We deny that local church elders are infallible. Even as a group, church leaders can make mistakes and must stay humble and teachable. Male elders must actively listen to the voices of spiritually mature women within the church family.

6- We deny that husbands are infallible in marriage. Christian husbands must listen to godly counsel (both from their wives and other men), must not bully or mistreat their wives, and must stay accountable to other men within the church family.

7- We deny that women are less important than men in the church.

8- We deny that sex is unimportant and irrelevant to God's design for creation.

Appendix - WBCC Practical Application of Women in Ministry

| Role | Prayer | Prophecy | Authoritative Teaching |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Verse relating to women | 1 Corinthians 11:5 | 1 Corinthians 11:5, Acts 21:9 | 1 Timothy 2:11-15 |
| Definition and verses relating to the definition | Corporate Prayer: Prayers offered to God in the hearing of other believers who agree with and affirm the prayers. | Forthtelling: explaining the present from God's perspective and encouraging God's people to overcome in a situation and move into his purposes. 1 Corinthians 14:3 1 Thessalonians 3:2-3 Foretelling: predict the future or future event Acts 21:10-12 | Authoritative Teaching: Divinely appointed teaching that those under that authority under Christ are required to obey. It is the final judgment of truth vs heresy. It also comes with the power and responsibility of church discipline. Hebrews 13:7,17 1 Timothy 5:17 |
| Role Distinction | No restriction. A woman can pray in any public gathering. | No Restriction. A woman can prophesy in any public gathering | Restricted. A woman may teach women, but may not authoritatively teach men by interpreting the scripture for men to follow and apply to their lives. A woman may organize, facilitate, and manage men in her role as a staff member or deacon as she fulfills her duties under the leadership of the elders. |
| Practical Application | A woman can pray in any corporate gathering. | A woman can forthtell a corporate gathering including community groups (mixed sex setting). If she uses scripture she must use it in an applicational way and communicate that this prophecy is based on a teaching in alignment with the elders. She may encourage the gathering to do what has clearly already been authoritatively taught by an elder. Any woman or man can foretell the gathering if her/his words are affirmed by the elders. (1 Corinthians 14:29-33) | Only qualified men may interpret the scriptures in an authoritative way that is applicable for both sexes. |